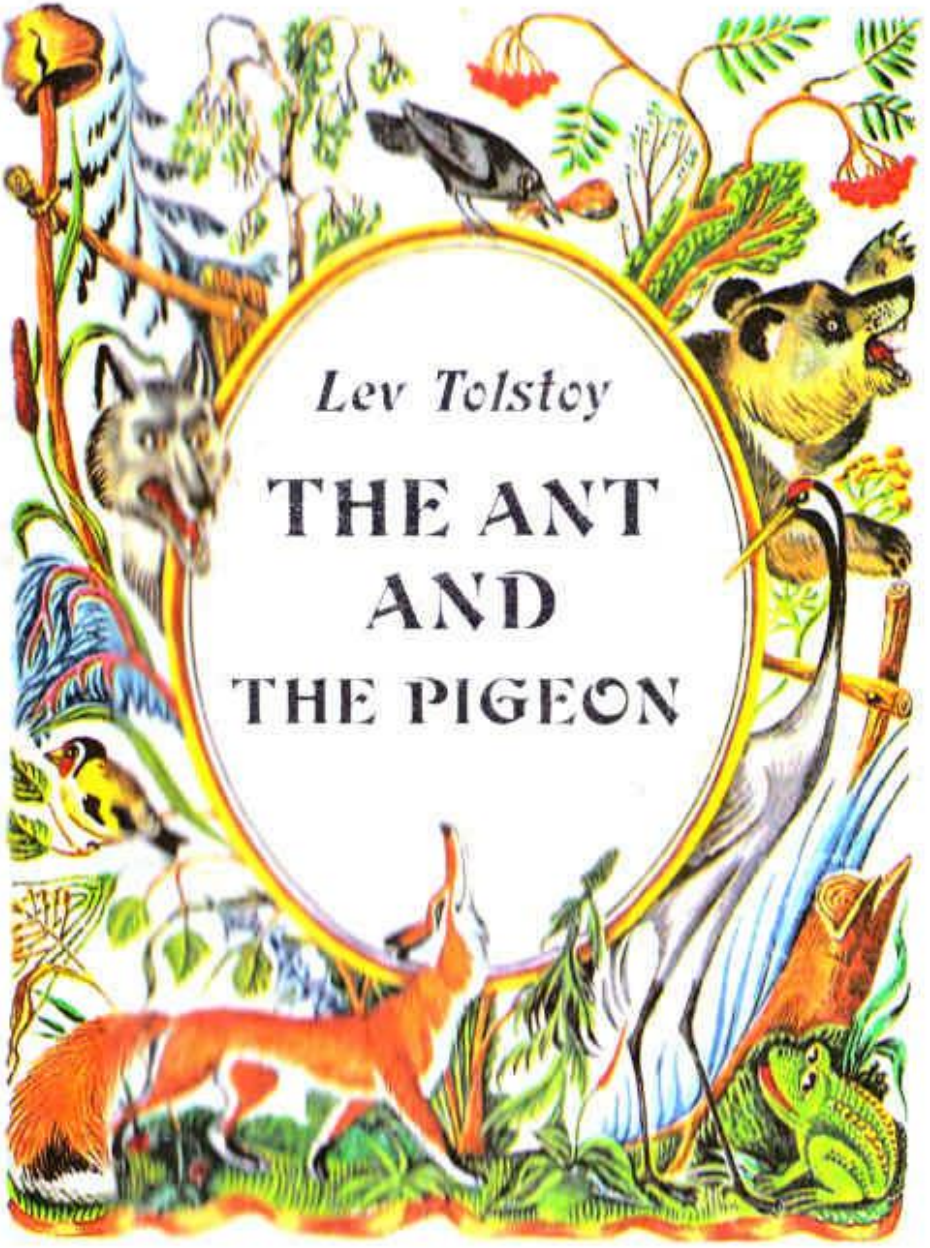
Lev Tolstoy
THE ANT
AND
THE PIGEON

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THE ANT AND THE PIGEON

Translated by K. M. COOK-HORUJY
Drawings by MIKHAIL ROMADIN

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The great Russian writer Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy was born and spent most of his life on his estate at Yasnaya Polyana. He was very fond of children and wrote many stories for the serf children on the estate.

Tolstoy published his stories for children in two books entitled *ABC* and *Russian Reader*. Many children learnt to read and write from these books. Tolstoy included his own versions of Greek and Roman legends and tales from other peoples. He was particularly fond of the fables composed by the Greek writer Aesop.

Tolstoy's translations of Aesop's

fables sometimes take the form of a proverb ("The Shipwreck") or a folk tale ("The Fox and the Wood-Grouse"), and are sometimes closer to an everyday story ("Two Companions"). He shifted the action of the fables to his native land, where they became Russian fables, independent creations of the great Russian writer.

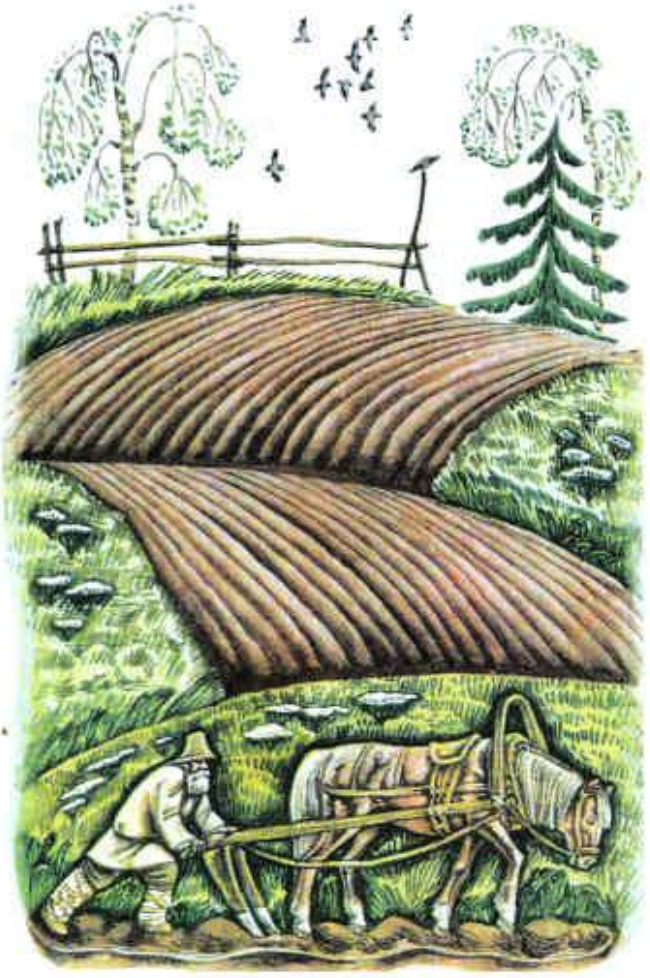
Greek fables usually ended with a moral of some kind. Tolstoy did away with this ending, retaining only the action and the characters, confident that children would work out for themselves what the fables were about and what conclusions should be drawn from them.

To translate Aesop faithfully, Tolstoy studied Greek and read a lot. Many legends have survived about Aesop. Some say he was a happy man, because he understood the language of animals and nature. Others say he was unhappy, because he was the slave of a rich man called Xanthes. But the important thing is that Aesop was a

wise and kind philosopher. He made people laugh at his characters' tricks. And the more they laughed, the wiser they became.

There are all sorts of characters in this book, humans, gods and animals, but no matter who they are the writer is talking, first and foremost, to children. Perhaps this is why his characters sometimes seem like children with masks on. Time and again the mask slips and a pair of twinkling child's eyes peep out. The artist Mikhail Romadin has taken care to preserve this feature in his illustrations.

Eduard Babayev



THE HORSE AND THE MARE

The mare grazed in the meadow day and night and did no ploughing, but the horse grazed only at night and ploughed in the day. So the mare said to the horse:

"Why do you plough? I wouldn't go if I were you. He'd whip, but I'd kick him back."

The next day the horse did as she said. When his master saw that he had grown stubborn, he harnessed the mare to the plough instead.

THE FOX AND THE CRANE

The fox invited the crane to dinner and served the meal on a plate. The crane could pick up nothing with his long beak, and the fox ate everything herself. Next day the crane invited the fox and served dinner in a jug with a nar-

row neck. The fox could not get her muzzle into the jug, but the crane stuck his long neck in and drank everything himself.

THE MONKEY'S CHILDREN

A monkey had two children. She loved one, but not the other. One day some people chased the monkey. She picked up her favourite child and ran off with him, but left the unloved one behind. The unloved child hid in a thicket, and the people ran past and did not notice him. But

the monkey leapt onto a tree in such a hurry that she knocked her beloved child's head against a branch and killed him. When the people had gone, the monkey went to look for her unloved child, but could not find him and was left all alone.

THE WOLF AND THE SQUIRREL

A squirrel was jumping from branch to branch and fell right onto a sleepy wolf. The wolf jumped up and wanted to eat her.

"Let me go," begged the squirrel.

"Very well," said the wolf. "I will let you go, only you must tell me why you squirrels are so happy. I'm always so miserable, but you are always playing and hopping about up there."

"First let me go onto the tree, and I'll tell you from there, for I'm afraid of you."

The wolf let her go, and the squirrel jumped onto the tree and said:

"You're miserable, because you are bad. Your badness burns your heart. And we're happy because we're good and never harm a soul."

THE EAGLE, THE CROW AND THE SHEPHERD

Some sheep were grazing in a field. Suddenly an eagle swooped down, sank his claws into a young lamb and carried it off. A crow saw this and wanted some meat as well.

"That's as easy as pie," she said. "I'll do it too, only better. The eagle's stupid, he took a small lamb, but I'll choose that fat ram over there."

The crow sank her claws into the ram's wool. She wanted to lift it up but could not. Nor could she pull her claws out of the ram's coat. The shepherd came up, pulled the crow's feet out of the fleece, killed her and left her there.

THE TWO ROOSTERS AND THE EAGLE

Two roosters were fighting by a heap of dung. One rooster was stronger than the other. He fought the other rooster and drove him away from the dung. The hens crowded round the rooster and praised him. The rooster wanted everyone in the neighbouring yard to hear of his strength and prowess. So he flew up onto the shed, flapped his wings and cried out:

"Look at me, everyone. I beat a rooster There is no other rooster in the world as str as me!"

At that moment an eagle flew up, knocked the rooster down, dug his claws into him and carried him off to his nest.

THE WAYFARERS

An old man and a young man were walking along, when they saw a sack of money lying on the road. The young man picked it up and said:

"God has sent me this find."

"Let's share it," said the old man.

"No," said the young man. "We didn't find it together, I picked it up on my own."

The old man said nothing. They walked on a little further. Suddenly they heard horses galloping in pursuit and people shouting:

"Who stole the sack of money?"

The young man took fright and said:

"Let's hope our find doesn't get us into trouble, uncle."

"It's your find, not ours, and your trouble, not ours."

They seized the young man and took him to town to be tried, but the old man went off home.

THE MOUSE, THE ROOSTER AND THE CAT

A little mouse went into the yard. She walked around and then went back to her mother.

"Oh, mother, I saw two animals. One frightening, the other nice."

"Tell me what the animals were like," said the mother.

"The frightening one was strutting about the yard," said the mouse. "He had black legs, a red comb, goggley eyes and a hooked nose. When I went past, he opened his beak, raised his foot and began to shout so loudly that he scared me stiff."

"That's the rooster," said the old mouse. "He never does anyone any harm. Don't be afraid of him. But what about the other animal?"

"The other one was basking in the sun. He had a white neck and smooth grey feet. He licked his white chest and waved his tail gently as he looked at me."

"You are a silly thing!" said the mouse. "That was the cat!"

THE FOX AND THE WOOD-GROUSE

A wood-grouse was sitting in a tree. A fox came up to him and said:

"Good-day to you, dear friend. I heard your sweet voice and came to say hello."

"Thank you kindly," said the wood-grouse.

The fox pretended not to hear and said:

"What's that? I didn't catch it. Why don't you come down here on the grass for a walk and a chat, dear friend. I can't hear what you're saying up there."

"I'm afraid of coming down on the grass," replied the wood-grouse. "It's dangerous for us birds on the ground."

"Perhaps you're afraid of me?" said the fox.

"If not you, then other beasts," said the wood-grouse. "There are all sorts around, you know."

"Oh, no, dear friend. A new decree has just been proclaimed, that everyone everywhere must live in peace. So now the animals don't harm one another."

"That's good," said the wood-grouse. "Because there are some dogs coming. If it weren't

for the decree, you'd have to run away like you used to. But now you need fear nothing."

At the mention of dogs, the fox pricked up her ears and turned tail.

"Where are you going?" asked the wood-grouse. "There's been a decree. The dogs won't touch you."

"Who knows!" said the fox. "Perhaps they haven't heard of the decree."

And away she ran.

THE WOLF AND THE DOG

A lean and hungry wolf was roaming around outside a village, when he met a sleek, well-fed dog.

"Tell me, dog," the wolf asked him. "Where do you dogs get food from?"

"Men give it to us," said the dog.

"Is it true that you work hard for them?"

"No, our work is not hard," said the dog. "Our job is to guard the house at night."

"Do they feed you for just doing that?" said the wolf. "I would take that job rightaway. It's hard for us wolves to find food."

"Come along then," said the dog. "My master will feed you too."

The wolf was pleased and went off with the dog to work for men. As he was going through the gate, he saw that the dog's fur was worn away on the neck.

"How did you do that, dog?"

"Oh, that's nothing," said the dog.

"What do you mean?"

"It's from the chain. I'm chained up in the daytime, and the chain has rubbed away the fur on my neck."

"Then I'm off, dog. Goodbye," said the wolf. "I'm not going to live with men. I'd rather stay hungry than lose my freedom."

THE SHIPWRECK

Some fishermen were out in a boat, when a storm blew up. They were afraid, dropped their oars and prayed to God to help them. The boat was carried farther and farther from the shore. Then the eldest fisherman said:

"Why drop your oars, lads? God helps those who help themselves."

THE GREEDY MOUSE

A mouse gnawed at the floor boards and made a crack. The mouse squeezed through the crack and found lots of food. The mouse was greedy and ate so much that her tummy was full. When day came, the mouse wanted to go back to her hole, but her tummy was so full that she could not squeeze through the crack.

THE MOUSE AND THE FROG

A mouse went to visit a frog. The frog met the mouse on the bank and invited her to her house under the water. The mouse went in, but swallowed so much water she barely managed to get out alive. 35

"I'll never go visiting strange folk again," she said.

THE FROG, THE MOUSE AND THE HAWK

The frog and the mouse started quarreling. They went into the open field and began to fight. The hawk saw they had forgotten about him, swooped down and carried them both away.

THE COUNTRY MOUSE AND THE TOWN MOUSE

A town mouse came to visit a country mouse. The country mouse lived in a field and gave her visitor all she had, peas and wheat. The town mouse nibbled it for a while, then said:

"You're so thin because your food is so poor. Come and see how we live in the town."

So the country mouse went to visit her. They waited until night-time, then the town mouse led her guest through a crack into the dining room, and they both climbed onto the table. The country mouse had never seen such fine fare.

"You're right," she said. "Our food is poor. I will come to live in the town too."

No sooner had she said so, than a man with a candle came into the room and chased the mice. They barely managed to escape through the crack.

"No," said the country mouse. "My house in the field is better. I may have no sweetmeats, but I never know such fear."

THE SEA, THE RIVERS AND THE STREAMS

One man boasted to another that he could drink a lot.

"I could drink up the whole sea," he said.

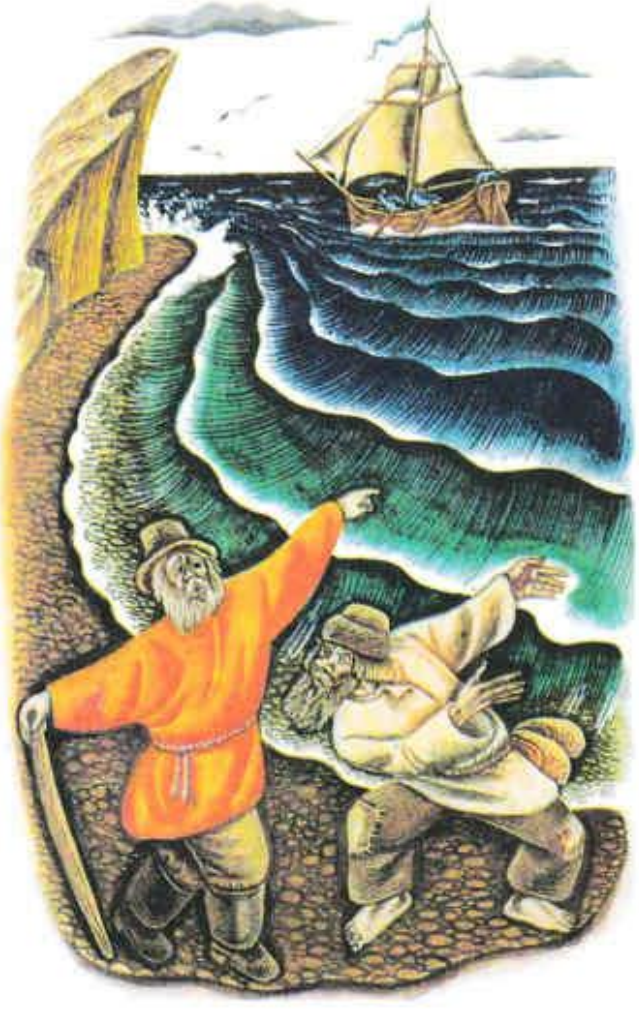
"You couldn't."

"Yes, I could. I bet you a thousand roubles I will drink up the whole sea."

Next morning they came to the man and said:

"Go and drink up the sea or give us a thousand roubles!"

"I said I would drink up the sea and I will," he said. "But I didn't say I would drink the rivers. Dam the rivers and streams so the water does not flow into the sea, then I'll drink it up."



THE EAGLE AND THE FOX

An eagle seized a fox cub and made to carry it off. The mother fox begged him to have pity. The eagle refused. "What can she do to me?" he thought. "My nest is high up in a pine tree. She can't reach it." And he carried the fox cub away. The mother fox ran to the field, took a

fire brand from the men there and carried it to the pine tree. She was about to set fire to it, when the eagle begged forgiveness and gave her back her cub.

THE CAT AND THE FOX

A cat got talking to a fox about how to give dogs the slip.

"I'm not afraid of dogs," said the cat. "Because I know a clever trick that always saves me from them."

"How can you get away from dogs with only

one trick?" said the fox. "I know seventy-seven clever tricks."

While they were talking, some hunters rode up with dogs. The cat used her only trick: she leapt up a tree and the dogs could not reach her. The fox tried all her clever tricks, but none of them worked, and the dogs caught her.

THE MONKEY AND THE FOX

One day the animals chose the monkey to be their leader. The fox came to the monkey and said:

"You are our leader now. I want to do you a favour. I have found some treasure in the forest. Come with me and I will show you."

The monkey was overjoyed and followed the fox. The fox took the monkey to a trap and said:

"Here it is. I didn't want to pick it up before you."

The monkey put her paws into the trap and got caught. Then the fox summoned the other animals and showed them the monkey.

"Look what sort of a leader you have chosen!" she said. "She's so stupid she got caught in a trap."

THE CAT AND THE BELL

The cat was giving the mice a bad time. Each day he caught two or three of them. So the mice got together to decide what to do about it. They talked and talked, but could think of nothing.

Then a little mouse said:

"I'll tell you what to do about the cat. The reason he catches us is because we don't notice him creeping up. We must tie a bell round his neck, so that it will make a noise. Then each time he creeps up, we'll hear him and run away."

"That's all very well," said an old mouse. "But someone must put the bell on the cat. Your idea is good, but we'll only thank you when you have tied the bell round the cat's neck."

THE LION AND THE ASS

One day the lion went hunting and took the ass with him.

"Go into the forest, ass," he said, "and shout as loud as you can. You've got a big throat. Then I'll catch the animals who run away from your shouting."

The ass did as he was told. He shouted, the animals ran away without looking where they were going, and the lion caught them. Afterwards the lion said to the ass:

"Well done, you shouted splendidly."

Ever since then the ass has gone on braying, expecting to be praised for it.

THE WOLF AND THE FOX

A wolf was running away from some dogs and wanted to hide in a gully. But in the gully sat a fox. She bared her teeth at the wolf and snarled:

"Go away, this is my place."

The wolf did not argue, but only said:

"If the dogs were not so close, I would show you whose place it is, but now it looks as if you are right."

THE FOX AND THE WOLF

The fox was bitten by fleas and thought up a plan to get rid of them. She went down to the river and lowered her tail little by little into the water. The fleas hopped off her tail onto her back. She lowered her hind legs into the water. The fleas hopped up her back onto her neck and head. She went right into the water, so that only her head was showing. The fleas crowded onto her muzzle. Then she dived under the water. The fleas leapt onto the bank, and the fox climbed out of the water further upstream.

The wolf saw this and wanted to do even better. He jumped straight into the water, dived down deep and stayed there for a long time. He thought all the fleas on him would drown. But when he came out of the water, the fleas came to life and started biting him again.

THE PEASANT AND LUCK

A peasant went to mow a meadow and fell asleep there. Along came Luck. It went up to the peasant and said:

"He's sleeping when he should be working. He won't bring the hay in before the weather breaks. Then he'll blame it all on me. 'It's bad luck,' he'll say."

THE GIRL AND THE DRAGONFLY

A little girl caught a dragonfly and wanted to pull off its legs.

"It's dragonflies that sing at dawn," said her father.

The little girl remembered their singing and let it go.

THE GRASS-SNAKE AND THE HEDGEHOG

The hedgehog came to the grass-snake and said:

"Let me into your nest for a while, snake."

So the snake did. The hedgehog crawled in, and the snake's children had no peace with him around. The snake said to the hedgehog:

"I only let you in for a while. You must go now. Your needles are pricking my children, and it hurts them."

"Let those who don't like it leave," said the hedgehog. "I feel fine here."

THE JACKDAW AND THE PITCHER

The jackdaw was thirsty. In the yard was a pitcher of water, but the water was at the bottom. The jackdaw could not reach it. She began to throw stones into the pitcher, until there were so many that the water rose high enough for her to drink it.

THE LITTLE BIRD

A little bird was sitting on a branch. Down below in the grass was a seed.

"I'll go and peck it up," said the bird.

She flew down from the branch and got caught in a net.

"And all for nothing," the little bird said. "Hawks catch live birds and nothing happens to them. But I got caught for the sake of one seed."

THE LIAR

A shepherd boy was out with his flock. Once he decided to shout, as though he had seen a wolf, "Help! A wolf! A wolf!"

The village men came running and saw that he had tricked them. He did this two or three times more. Then it so happened that a wolf really did attack the flock.

The boy began to shout, "Come! Hurry! It's a wolf!"

The village men decided that he was tricking them again and paid no attention to him.

The wolf saw he need fear no one and killed the whole flock.

THE ANT AND THE PIGEON

An ant went down to a brook to drink. A wave knocked him over and he nearly drowned. A pigeon was flying overhead with a twig in her beak. She saw the ant drowning in the brook and dropped the twig to him. The ant climbed onto the twig and was saved. Then a hunter threw a net over the pigeon and was about to pull it tight. The ant crawled up to the hunter and bit his leg. The hunter cried out with pain and dropped the net. Out flew the pigeon and soared away.

THE JACKDAW AND THE PIGEONS

A jackdaw saw that the pigeons were well fed, painted herself white and flew into the pigeon-cot. At first the pigeons thought she was one of them and let her in. But then the jackdaw forgot herself and cawed like a jackdaw. The pigeons pecked her and chased her away. The jackdaw flew back to the other jackdaws, but they were afraid of her because she was white and chased her away too.

THE EAGLE AND THE TORTOISE

A tortoise asked an eagle to teach her to fly. The eagle told her it was not the thing for tortoises to do. But she kept begging him. So the eagle took her in his claws, flew up and let her go. She fell onto some rocks and was smashed to death.

THE ASS AND THE HORSE

There was once a man who had an ass and a horse. As they were going along the road, the ass said to the horse:

"My load is too heavy for me. I won't be able to carry it all the way. Take a little from me."

The horse refused. The ass collapsed with exhaustion and died. Then the man loaded

everything from the ass onto the horse, and the ass's skin as well.

"Woe is me," wailed the horse. "Poor wretch that I am! I refused to help the ass, so now I'm carrying everything, and his skin to boot."

THE LION AND THE MOUSE

A lion lay sleeping. A mouse ran over him. He woke up and caught her. The mouse begged him to let her go.

"If you let me go, I will do you a good deed," she said.

The lion laughed at the idea of the mouse doing him a good deed, and let her go.

Then hunters caught the lion and tied him to a tree. The mouse heard him roaring, ran up, gnawed through the ropes and said:

"Remember how you laughed because you thought I couldn't do you a good deed?" she said. "Now you see that a mouse can do good too."

THE WOMAN AND THE HEN

A hen laid an egg every day. Her mistress thought if she gave the hen more food it would lay twice as many eggs. So she did. The hen grew fat and stopped laying eggs at all.

THE HEN AND THE GOLDEN EGGS

A man had a hen who laid golden eggs. He wanted a lot of gold, so he killed the hen, thinking there was a lump of gold inside it. But it was just the same as other hens.

THE DOG, THE ROOSTER AND THE FOX

A dog and a rooster set off on their travels. In the evening the rooster went to sleep in a tree, and the dog lay down at the bottom of the tree, between the roots. When it was time, the rooster began to crow. A fox heard him, ran up and asked him to come down so she could pay her respects to him for having such a fine voice.

"You must wake the yardman first," said the rooster. "He's asleep between the roots. When he opens up, I will come down."

The fox looked for the yardman and began yelping. Up jumped the dog and that was the end of the fox.

THE FERRET

A ferret went to a copper smithy and licked a file. His tongue began to bleed. The ferret was pleased for he thought the blood was coming from the iron, and so he ruined his whole tongue.

THE LION, THE BEAR AND THE FOX

A lion and a bear got hold of some meat and began to fight over it. The bear would not give way, neither would the lion. They fought for a long while, until they were very tired and lay down. A fox saw the meat lying between them, grabbed it and ran away.

THE WOLF AND THE OLD WOMAN

A hungry wolf was looking for food. On the edge of a village he heard a boy crying in a house and an old woman say:

"If you don't stop crying, I'll give you to the wolf."

The wolf went no further and waited to be given the boy. Night fell. On he waited until he heard the old woman say:

"Don't cry, my darling. I won't give you to the wolf. If he dares come by, we'll kill him straightaway."

"The folk here say one thing, but do another," thought the wolf and went on his way.

THE DRAGONFLY AND THE ANTS

In autumn the ants' store of wheat got wet and they set about drying it. A hungry dragonfly begged them for some food.

"Why didn't you store up food in the summer?" the ants asked.

"I didn't have time. I was singing songs," she replied.

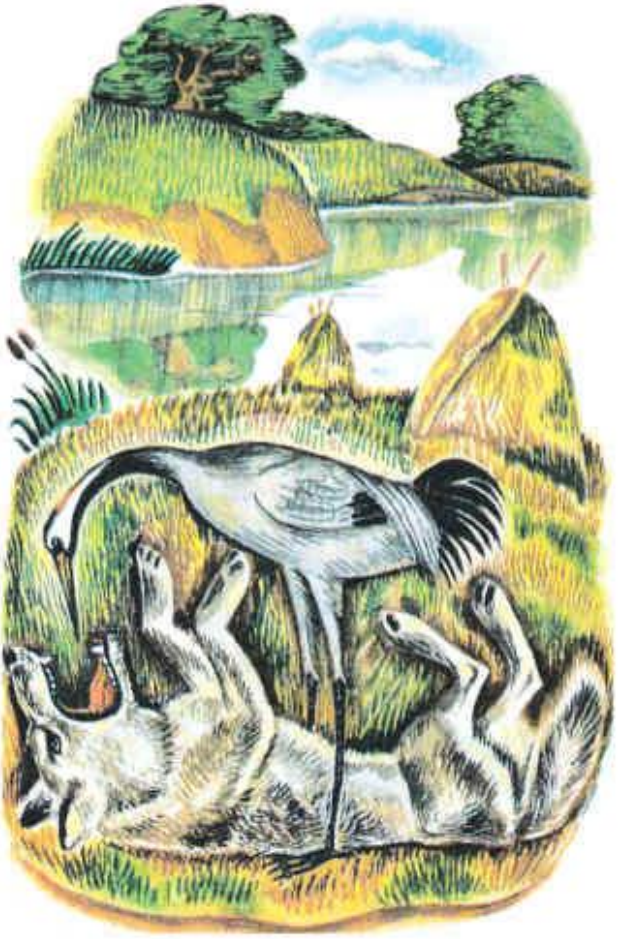
They laughed and said:

"If you sang in the summer, you can dance in the winter."

THE FROG AND THE LION

A lion heard a frog croaking loudly. It made such a noise, he thought it must be a large animal. He waited a while, then saw the frog jump out of the marsh. The lion crushed it with his paw and said:

"Fancy being frightened by a little midget like that."



THE WOLF AND THE CRANE

A wolf was choking on a bone and could not cough it up. He called a crane and said:

"Now then, crane, you have a long neck. Put your head down my throat and pull out the bone. I will reward you."

The crane put in his head, pulled out the bone and said:

"Now give me the reward."

The wolf gnashed his teeth and snarled:

"Isn't it enough that I didn't bite off your head when it was between my teeth?"

THE MAIDS AND THE ROOSTER

A mistress woke her maids up at night and put them to work when the rooster crowed. The maids were unhappy with this and decided to kill the rooster so he would not wake up their mistress. And so they did, but it was the worse for them. Their mistress was afraid of oversleeping and got them up even earlier.

THE DOG AND HER SHADOW

A dog was walking along a plank over a stream, carrying a piece of meat in her mouth. She saw herself in the water and thought there was another dog carrying meat down there. She dropped the meat and tried to take the other piece away. But there was no other piece, and her own meat was carried away by the stream. So the dog was left with nothing.

THE STAG AND THE YOUNG DEER

A young deer once asked a stag:

"You are bigger and faster than dogs, father, and you have large antlers to protect you. Why are you so afraid of dogs?"

The stag laughed and said:

"That is true, my child. The trouble is I run away when I hear dogs bark, without stopping to think."

THE FOX AND THE GRAPES

A fox saw some bunches of ripe grapes and did all she could to get them down. She tried for a long time, but could not reach them.

"They're sour," she said, to make up for her disappointment.

THE HEN AND THE SWALLOW

A hen found some snake eggs and sat on them to hatch them out. A swallow saw her and said:

"Silly thing! You'll hatch them out, and when they grow up you'll be the first to suffer."

THE ASS IN THE LION'S SKIN

An ass put on a lion's skin, and everyone thought he was a lion. People and animals fled from him. Then a gust of wind blew the lion's skin open, so you could see the ass. Up ran the people and thrashed him to within an inch of his life.

THE GARDENER AND HIS SONS

A gardener wanted his sons to learn his trade. On his death bed he called them to him and said:

"When I die, children, search in the vineyard for what lies hidden there."

His children thought it was buried treasure, and when their father died they dug up the whole vineyard. They found no buried treasure, but dug the soil so well that it yielded twice the amount of grapes. And so they became rich.

THE FOX AND THE GOAT

A goat felt thirsty. He climbed down a steep slope to a well, drank his fill and grew heavy. He tried to climb up again but could not. Then he began to bleat. A fox saw him and said:

"Serves you right, blockhead. If you had as many brains in your head as hairs in your beard, you would have thought about how to get out before you climbed down there."

THE CRANES AND THE STORK

A man put down nets to catch cranes because they were eating the seeds he had sown. The cranes got caught in the nets, and a stork with them.

The stork said to the man:

"Let me go. I'm a stork, not a crane. We are

the most respected birds. I live on the roof of your father's house. You can see from my feathers that I'm not a crane."

"I caught you with the cranes," said the man, "and with the cranes I shall kill you."

THE FISHERMAN AND THE LITTLE FISH

A fisherman caught a little fish.

"Throw me back into the water, fisherman," said the fish. "You can see how small I am. I'll be of little use to you. But if you let me go, I'll grow up and be of more use when you catch me."

"I'd be a fool to do that," said the fisherman. "A small fish in the net is worth a big one in the water."

HARES AND FROGS

The hares got together and lamented their fate: "We're prey to men, dogs, eagles and all sorts of beasts. It would be better to die, than live in fear and torment. Let's drown ourselves."

So the hares raced down to the lake to drown themselves. The frogs heard the hares and dived into the water. Then one of the hares said: "Wait a minute, lads! Don't let's drown ourselves yet. A frog's life must be even worse than ours. They're afraid of us as well."

THE FATHER AND HIS SONS

A father bade his sons live in harmony. They would not listen to him. So he told them to bring a besom and said:

"Break it!"

No matter how hard they tried, they could not break it. Then the father untied the besom and told them to break the twigs one at a time.

They broke the twigs one by one with no trouble at all.

"It's the same with you," the father said. "If you live in harmony, no one will get the better of you. But if you quarrel and split up, anyone will easily ruin you."

THE FOX

A fox got caught in a trap and left her tail there. She thought of a way to hide her shame. Then she called the other foxes together and told them to cut off their tails.

"A tail is a nuisance," she said. "Just an extra load to carry around."

"You wouldn't say that if you hadn't lost yours," said one of the foxes.

The tailless fox went away without another word.

THE MOSQUITO AND THE LION

A mosquito flew up to a lion and said:

"So you think you're stronger than me, do you? Well, you're not. You're not strong at all.

All you can do is scratch with your claws and bite with your teeth, like women do when they're fighting men. I'm stronger than you. How about waging battle?"

The mosquito sounded a fanfare and began to sting the lion on the cheeks and nose. The lion pawed and scratched his face, until it was covered with blood and he was tired out.

The mosquito trumpeted with joy and flew off. Then he got caught in a spider's web, and the spider began to eat him.

"I got the better of a strong animal like the lion, but now this rotten spider will be the death of me," said the mosquito.

THE DOG AND THE WOLF

A dog went to sleep outside the yard. A hungry wolf ran up and wanted to eat her.

"Wait a bit, wolf," said the dog. "Don't eat me right now. I'm thin and bony. But soon my owners will have a wedding, then I shall have plenty of food and grow fat. It would be better to eat me then."

The wolf believed her and went away. The next time he came, the dog was lying on the roof.

"Have you had the wedding?" asked the wolf.

"Listen to me, wolf," said the dog. "Next time you see me asleep outside the yard, don't bother to wait for a wedding."

THE WILD ASS AND THE TAME ASS

A wild ass saw a tame ass, went up to him and envied how smooth and plump he was and what fine food he had. But when the tame ass was loaded and his master drove him with his cudgel, the wild ass said:

"No, brother, I do not envy you any more. I see you pay a high price for it."

THE HORSE AND HER MASTERS

A gardener had a horse. The horse was given plenty of work, but little to eat. So she prayed to God for another master. And she got one. The gardener sold her to the potter. The horse was overjoyed, but the potter gave her even more work than the gardener. Again the horse began to lament her fate and pray for a better master. And again her prayer was answered. The potter sold her to the tanner. When the horse saw the skins in the tanner's yard, she howled miserably:

"Ah, woe is me! Why didn't I stay with my old masters! Now I have been sold not for my work, but for my skin."

THE WOLF AND THE GOAT

A wolf saw a goat grazing on a rocky mountain, but could not reach her.

"Why don't you come down here?" he said. "The ground's flatter and the grass much sweeter."

But the goat said:

"That's not why you're calling me down, wolf. It's your belly you're worried about, not mine."

THE STAG

A stag went down to a stream to drink, saw himself in the water and admired his antlers which were so big and spreading. But then he looked at his legs and said:

"Only my poor legs are as thin as matchsticks."

Suddenly out jumped a lion and leapt at the stag. The stag raced off across the open plain. He was drawing away, but when he came to the forest, his antlers got tangled in the branches, and the lion caught him. When his end was near, the stag said:

"What a fool I was! What I thought was poor and thin as matchsticks saved me, and what I admired was the death of me."

THE STAG AND THE VINEYARD

A stag hid from hunters in a vineyard. When the hunters had gone past, the stag began to eat the vine leaves.

The hunters saw the leaves move and thought: "Is that an animal there behind the leaves?" They fired and hit the stag.

"Serves me right for wanting to eat the leaves which saved me," said the dying stag.

THE OLD MAN AND DEATH

An old man chopped a pile of firewood and began carrying it home. The way was long. He grew tired, laid down his bundle and said:

"Ah, if only Death would come!"

Death came to him and said:

"Here I am. What do you want?"

The man took fright and replied:

"I want you to pick up my bundle."

THE LION AND THE FOX

The lion had grown too old to hunt his prey and thought up a trick. He went into a cave, lay down and pretended to be ill. The animals came to see how he was faring, and those who went into the cave got eaten. The fox realised what was going on, stood by the entrance to the cave and said:

"Well, lion, how are you feeling?"

"None too well," said the lion. "Why don't you come in?"

"Because I can see from the footprints that those who go in never come out," replied the fox.

THE CAT AND THE MICE

A certain house had a lot of mice. A cat crept into the house and began catching them. The mice saw that they were in trouble and said:

"Let's stay up here on the ceiling, fellows! The cat can't get us here!"

When the mice stopped coming down, the cat thought up a plan to outwit them. He dug one paw into the ceiling and hung there pretending to be dead. One mouse looked at him and said:

"No, brother! I wouldn't go near you even if you turned into a sack!"

THE RAVEN AND THE FOX

A raven found a piece of meat and sat down on a branch. A fox wanted some meat too. She came up and said:

"Hey, raven, you're a handsome fellow. With your height and good looks you could be tsar. And you probably would be tsar if you had a fine voice."

The raven opened his mouth and cawed with all his might. The meat fell down. The fox seized it and said:

"Ah, raven, you would be tsar, if only you had some brains."

TWO FRIENDS

Two friends were walking through the forest when a bear attacked them. One turned and fled. He climbed a tree and sat there, while the other remained on the road. There was nothing for him to do but fall to the ground and play dead.

The bear came up to him and sniffed. The boy even stopped breathing.

The bear sniffed his face, decided he was dead and lumbered off.

When the bear was gone the other boy climbed down and said with a smile, "What did the bear whisper in your ear?"

"It said that someone who deserts his friend in time of danger is not a good person at all."

THE PEASANT AND THE WATER SPRITE

A peasant dropped his axe into the river. He was so unhappy that he sat down on the bank and began to cry.

A water sprite heard him crying, felt sorry for him and brought him a golden axe, saying:

"Is this your axe?"

"No," said the man, "it's not mine."

The water sprite brought him another axe, a silver one.

"That's not my axe," the man said again.

Then the water sprite brought him his own axe.

"That one is mine," said the man.

The water sprite gave the man all three axes for telling the truth.

The man went home, showed his friends the three axes and told them what had happened.

One man decided to do the same. He went to the river, threw his axe into the water and started crying.

The water sprite brought him a golden axe and asked:

"Is this your axe?"

The man was overjoyed and shouted:

"Yes, yes, it's mine!"

But the water sprite did not give him the golden axe or his own axe, because he had lied to him.

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB

A wolf saw a lamb drinking by the edge of a brook.

The wolf wanted to eat the lamb and tried to pick a quarrel with him.

"You're muddying the water, so I can't drink it," he said.

"Oh, wolf, how could I be muddying the water? I'm standing downstream from you and only touching it with the tip of my lips."

"Well, why were you rude to my father last summer?" asked the wolf.

"But I wasn't even born last summer, wolf," the lamb replied.

The wolf got angry and said:

"You've got an answer for everything. I'm hungry, see, and that's why I'm going to eat you."

THE LION, THE WOLF AND THE FOX

An old lion was lying sick in a cave. All the animals had been to pay their respects to the tsar, except the fox. The wolf seized the chance to say nasty things about the fox to the tsar.

"She doesn't think much of you," he said. "She hasn't been once to pay her respects to the tsar."

At these words up ran the fox. She heard what the wolf said and thought: "Just you wait, wolf, I'll get my revenge."

The lion roared at the fox, but she said to him:

"Let me say a word before you kill me. I did not come before, because I hadn't time. And I hadn't time, because I was running all over the place asking doctors how to make you better. I have only just found out how and hurried to tell you."

"Well," said the tsar. "What will make me better?"

"I'll tell you. You must flay a wolf alive and put on his skin while it is still warm..."

The lion tore the wolf to pieces, and the fox laughed and said:

"Serves you right, brother. Rulers should be encouraged to do good, not bad."

THE LION, THE ASS AND THE FOX

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The lion, the ass and the fox went out to hunt for food. They caught plenty of animals, and the lion told the ass to divide them up. The ass divided them into three equal shares and said:

"Now take yours."

The lion grew angry, ate the ass and told the fox to redivide it. The fox put everything in one heap, leaving only a little for herself. The lion looked and said:

"Clever girl! Who taught you to divide so well?"

"I saw what happened to the ass," she replied.

THE REED AND THE OLIVE TREE

The olive tree and the reed had an argument about who was stronger. The olive tree laughed at the reed, because it bowed before the wind. The reed said nothing. A storm blew up. The reed swayed and shook, bowing down to the ground, and survived the storm. The olive tree braced its branches against the wind and snapped in two.

THE CAT AND THE RAM

There was once a man who had a cat and a ram. When he came home from work the cat would run up to him, lick his hand, jump onto his back and rub itself against him. And the man would stroke it and give it bread.

The ram also wanted to be stroked and given bread. So one day when the man came back from the field, the ram ran up to him, licked his hands and rubbed itself against his legs. The man thought this was funny and waited to see what would happen next. The ram went behind him, stood on its hind legs and jumped on the man's back, knocking him over.

The man's son saw the ram knock his father over, took a whip and gave the ram a good hiding.

THE HARE

A hare ran into a forest to get away from some dogs. It was nice in the forest, but he was still so afraid that he wanted an even better hiding place. He went deeper in the forest and found a thicket in a ravine. But a wolf was lurking there and he caught the hare. "It's true what they say," thought the hare. "Be thankful for what you've got. I wanted a better hiding place, and that was my undoing."

THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE

The hare and the tortoise had an argument about who could run faster. They decided to run a mile. The hare raced ahead straightaway, leaving the tortoise far behind out of view. "Why should I hurry now?" the hare thought. "I'll sit down for a minute." He sat down to rest and fell asleep. But the tortoise plodded on and on, and when the hare awoke, the tortoise had already crawled the whole mile.

THE QUAIL AND HER CHILDREN

A quail hatched her young in a field of oats and was afraid the master would come and mow the field. She flew off to hunt for food and bade her children listen and tell her what the men said. When she came back that evening her children said:

"It's bad, mother. The master came and said to his son: 'The oats are ripe, it's time to mow. Go to our friends and neighbours and bid them come and help with the mowing.' It's bad, mother. Take us away. The neighbours are coming to mow early in the morning."

The old quail listened and said:

"Do not worry, children. The oats won't get mown for a while. You need have no fear."

And again she flew away at daybreak and bade them listen to what the master said. When the quail returned, her children said to her:

"The master was here again, mother. He waited for his friends and neighbours, but no one came. Then he said to his son: 'Go to your cousins, brothers-in-law and godfathers and tell them your father bids them come tomorrow without fail and help mow the oat field.'"

"Don't be afraid, children. There won't be any mowing tomorrow either," said the old quail.

The third day she returned again and asked:

"Well, what happened?"

"The master and his son were here again, waiting for their relatives. Their relatives did not come. Then the master said to his son: 'Looks like we'll have no help with the harvest, lad. The oats are ripe. Get the hooks ready. We'll come and mow on our own at sunrise.'"

"Ah, children," said the quail. "When a man tackles a job on his own, without waiting for help, the job will get down. It's time we went."

THE PEACOCK

The birds assembled to choose a tsar. The peacock spread his tail and began calling himself tsar. And all the birds chose him as tsar for his good looks. But the magpie said:

"Tell us, peacock, when you are tsar, how will you protect us from the hawk if he chases us?"

The peacock did not know what to say. The birds began to doubt that he would make a good tsar. So they chose the eagle to be tsar instead.

THE BEAR AND THE BEES

A bear came lumbering through the trees
And stole the honey from the bees.
Then up the angry bees all rose.
And stung the bear upon the nose.
"Ouch, ouch, my nose!" the bear did cry
And straightway homewards he did hie.

THE BEES AND THE DRONES

When summer came, the drones began quarreling with the bees about who should eat the honey. The bees asked the wasp to pass judgment. But the wasp said:

"I cannot pass judgment at once. I do not yet know which of you makes the honey. Go into two empty hives, the bees into one and the drones into the other. And in a week's time I shall see who makes the most honey and the best."

The drones objected:

"We don't agree," they said. "You must judge here and now."

"Very well, I will," said the wasp. "You don't agree, drones, because you don't make honey, but only like eating honey made by others. Chase them away, bees."

And the bees gave the drones a good hiding.

THE PEACOCK AND THE CRANE

A peacock and a crane were arguing about which of them was the most important. The peacock said:

"I am the most beautiful of all the birds. My tail shines with all the colours of the rainbow. But you are grey and plain."

"Yet I fly in the sky," replied the crane. "While you walk around in a mucky yard."

THE QUAIL AND THE HUNTER

A quail got caught in a hunter's net and begged him to let her go.

"Let me go and I will be of service to you," she said. "I will lure other quails into your net."

"Oh, quail," said the hunter. "I would probably not have let you go anyway, but now I certainly won't. I'll wring your neck for wanting to betray your kith and kin."

THE SPARROW

The sparrow saw a man going to sow flax. He flew to the other birds and said:

"Go and peck up the flax seeds as fast as you can, birds. When the flax grows, the man will make thread from it and from the thread he will make nets to catch us."

The birds took no notice of the sparrow, who could not peck up all the flax seeds on his own. The flax blossomed, and again the sparrow called the birds to peck up the flax so that it did not cause them harm later. But the birds took no notice. The flax ripened. The sparrow called the birds a third time. And again they took no notice. Then the sparrow got angry with them and flew away to live with men instead.

THE HAWK AND THE PIGEONS

A hawk kept chasing pigeons, but could not catch a single one. So he thought of a way to trick them. He flew up to the pigeon-cot, sat down on a tree and began telling them that he wished to serve them.

"I have nothing to do," he said, "and I am very fond of you. I tell you what. You let me in and make me your tsar, and I will serve you. I will not only stop chasing you, but see that no one else harms you."

The pigeons agreed and let the hawk in. When the hawk was inside, he spoke differently.

"I am your tsar and you must obey me. First of all, I must have a pigeon for dinner every day."

And every day he killed a pigeon. The pigeons were in despair and tried to think what to do, but it was too late.

"We should never have let him in," they said. "There's nothing we can do about it now."

THE MASTER AND THE WORKMAN

Lots of people gathered for a wedding. A neighbour called his workman and said:

"Go and see how many people there are at the wedding."

The workman went off, placed a block of wood in the doorway and sat on the bench outside to wait for the folk to come out.

They began to leave. Everyone who came out tripped up on the block of wood, cursed and went on his way. Only one old woman came out, tripped up, then went back and moved the block out of the way.

The workman returned to his master.

"Were there many people?" his master asked.

"There was only one, an old woman," replied the workman.

"How can that be?"

"Well, I put a block of wood by the porch and everyone tripped up on it, but didn't move it out of the way. Just like sheep they were. But the old woman moved it, so no one else would trip up. Only real people do that. So she was the only real person."

THE POT AND THE PAN

A clay pot had a quarrel with an iron pan. The pot threatened to hit the pan.

"It makes no difference if you hit me or I hit you," said the pan. "For it will be you that breaks, not me."

THE BAT

Long, long ago there was a bitter war between the animals and the birds. The bat did not join in on either side. She waited to see who would gain the upper hand.

At first the birds began to win, so the bat joined the birds and flew about with them, calling herself a bird. But then, when the animals looked like winning, the bat went over to them. She showed them her teeth, paws and suckers and assured them she was an animal and liked animals. In the end the birds won, so the bat went over to them again, but they chased her away.

She could not go back to the animals either, so ever since then the bat has lived in cellars and tree trunks, flying only at dusk and steering clear of both animals and birds.

THE MISER

A miser saved up a chest full of money, buried it in the ground and went secretly each day to look at it. His workman happened to see him. That night the workman dug up the chest and stole it. When the miser came to look at his money, he saw it was gone and began to cry. A neighbour saw him and said:

"Why are you crying? You never did anything with the money, did you? Go and look at the hole where it was. What's the difference?"

THE MAN AND THE DOG

A dog fell down a well. A man tried to pull her out, but the dog bit his hand. The man threw her back and said:

"Stay down there, if all you can do is bite me for trying to rescue you."

THE DOG AND THE STICK

A dog began chasing the hens. Her master hung a stick round her neck. Then the dog paraded round the yards, saying:

"See how fond my master is of me. He has singled me out from all the other dogs."

THE SHEPHERD

A shepherd lost one of his sheep. He looked everywhere, but could not find it. So he began to pray and promised to light a ten-copeck candle if he found the thieves. The next day he

went into the forest and came upon some wolves. They were finishing off his sheep. The shepherd had found the thieves. But when the wolves pounced on him, he began to pray and promised to light a rouble candle if only he got away from them.

THE DOG ON THE HAY

A dog was lying on some hay in a barn. A cow felt like munching a bit of hay. She went up to the barn, and poked her head inside. No sooner had she taken a mouthful of hay, than the dog growled and snapped at her. The cow went away, saying:

"Just fancy that! She's not eating it herself, but she won't let me either."

THE WOLF AND THE BONE

A wolf was carrying a bone. Some pups began yapping at him. The wolf could have torn them to pieces, but he did not want to open his mouth and drop the bone, so he ran away from them.

THE DOG AND THE THIEF

A thief stole into a yard at night. The dog heard him and began to bark. The thief took some bread and tossed it to the dog. The dog refused the bread, leapt at the thief and bit his leg.

"Why are you biting me? I gave you bread," said the thief.

"I'll tell you why. Before you gave me bread, I didn't know if you were a good man or a bad man. But now I know you must be a bad man, if you want to bribe me."

THE WOLF AND THE MARE

A wolf had his eye on a foal. He went up to the herd and said:

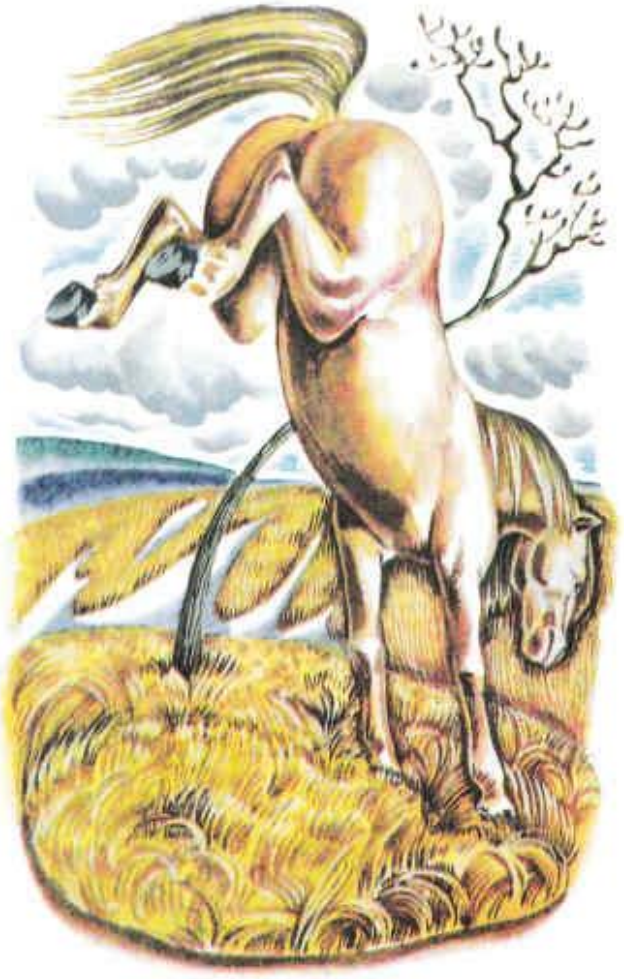
"Why is one of your foals limping? Don't you know how to cure it? We, wolves, have some medicine that gets rid of limping."

"Can you cure limping then?" asked one of the mares.

"Of course I can."

"Then cure my right hind leg. There's a pain in my hoof."

The wolf went up to the mare and when he was right behind her, she kicked out and smashed all his teeth.



THE FOX AND THE WOLF

A fox saw a wolf sharpening his teeth and said:

"Why are you sharpening your teeth? There's no one to fight."

"As long as there's no one to fight, I'll go on sharpening my teeth," said the wolf. "When it's time to fight, there won't be any time to sharpen them."

THE STAG AND THE HORSE

A stag gored a horse with his antlers and chased her away from the field. The horse went to a man and asked him to protect her. The man drove away the stag, but put a bridle and saddle on the horse. When the stag had been chased away, the horse said:

"Thank you, man. You can let me go now."

"No," said the man. "Now I know how useful you can be to me."

And he did not let her go.

THE TWO FROGS

The ponds and marshes had dried up from the heat. Two frogs went to look for water. They hopped onto the edge of a well and sat there, wondering whether to jump down into the water or not. The young frog said:

"We must jump down. There's plenty of water and no one will trouble us down there."

"No," said the other frog. "There may be plenty of water now, but we'll never get out if it dries up."

THE WOLF AND THE PIG

A she-wolf asked a pig if she could stay the night. The pig let her in. The wolf had a litter of cubs. Then the pig asked for her place back.

"My cubs are still little, you can see for yourself," said the wolf. "Wait a bit."

"I'll wait..." thought the pig.

Summer went by, and the pig asked again.

"Don't you dare touch us," said the wolf. "There are six of us, and we'll tear you to pieces."

THE BULL AND THE FROG

A bull went up to a lake, where there were lots of frogs, and trod on one of them. The rest hopped into the water. One little frog went home to his mother and said:

"Oh, mother, I saw a terribly big animal today."

"What, bigger than me?" asked his mother.

"Much bigger."

The old frog puffed herself up and said:

"Bigger than me now?"

"Yes."

She puffed herself up even more.

"Still bigger?"

"Yes. You couldn't puff yourself up to the size of a bull for your life."

The old frog puffed herself up as hard as she could and burst.

THE FROGS WHO ASKED FOR A TSAR

The frogs began quarreling, and there was no one to decide who was right. So they asked God to give them a tsar. Then a branch over their lake happened to break and fall into the water.

"There's a tsar for us," said the frogs and ran away.

The branch got stuck in the mud and stayed there. The frogs grew bolder and began to swim and hop up to it. The branch just lay there peacefully. The frogs saw that their tsar was quiet and did not pass judgment on them, so they asked for another tsar. Now a heron happened to be flying past the lake and landed on it.

"Here's a real live tsar. He'll decide our quarrels," the frogs cried joyfully.

Only when the heron began to catch them and eat them one by one, did they wish they still had their quiet old tsar.

THE MERCHANT AND THE THIEVES

Two men went into a merchant's shop to buy shawls. The merchant turned away from his wares. When he looked at the counter again, one of the shawls had gone. The merchant stopped the two men and said:

"One of you has stolen a shawl."

One man swore that he hadn't got the shawl, while the other swore that he hadn't taken it.

"Then you are both thieves," said the merchant.

He guessed that one had taken the shawl and given it to the other. He searched the thief who swore that he hadn't taken the shawl, found it on him and took both thieves to the magistrate.

THE SUN AND THE WIND

The sun had an argument with the wind about who could undress a person first. The wind blew a man's jacket open and tugged at his cap, but the man simply pulled down his cap and buttoned up his jacket. So the wind did not undress him. Then it was the sun's turn. No sooner did it get hot, than the man unbuttoned his jacket and pushed back his cap. Then it got hotter still, and the man took everything off.

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Lev Tolstoy **THE ANT AND THE PIGEON**